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FORGING A NATIONAL STRATEGY

Address by Senator Henry M. Jackson

Member, Senate Armed Services Committee
Senate Government Operations Committee
Chairman, Military Application Subcommittee
Joint Committee on Atomic Energy

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Mr. Chairman and Friends:

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I should like to express my appreciation for this opportunity to address you tonight. I have great respect for the professional and constructive work of the Military Government Association. Many of us in Congress rely heavily on your help in promoting national defense and in developing more effective ways to discharge this nation's international responsibilities.

I know of no more congenial group before which to discuss the tasks of statesmanship in this dangerous age.

When a Hitler strikes for world domination, free men spring to arms in defense of their liberties, and they fight with an irresistible will to victory. Time and again, free men have proven their magnificent ability to unite in response to a military challenge.

Today, free men face a more ingenious foe than the storm trooper. The Soviets confront us with a test of will even more difficult than the battlefield. They are betting that we do not have the staying power to win the long, drawn-out competition of the cold war.

The Soviet rulers think in terms of power. Superior power, they believe, will eventually prevail. In every way, on every occasion, they seek to expand and consolidate their strength, confident that small gains here and there, at the margins of conflict, will determine the fate of the world.

The Kremlin favors settlements that will unsettle things and that will add up, in time, to a Communist world order. By a kind of Gresham's law of politics, bad political currency drives out good. It takes two to make peace, but only one to make trouble. Or, to change the figure of speech, we cannot hope to win the international game of fox and geese if

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we always allow the Russians to play the role of the fox.

In short, the Russians are determined to play the game of power politics, and we cannot choose not to play. The only course open to us is to play it better or to lose.

The issue that predominates over all others in our national life is this: Can our free society marshal its strength to defend and preserve our way of life against the total challenge of the Communist states? I think you will agree that we cannot take for granted that the answer will be yes.

I hasten to add that this is not a partisan matter. Democracy is on trial for its life. Neither party has a monopoly of wisdom or a monopoly of errors on this great issue. My remarks apply to what is a national problem -- a national challenge.

As events have been moving, we are losing the contest. We are on the defensive almost everywhere.

We have been outdistanced militarily. We are now not even striving for equality in the advanced weapons systems, although superiority in these weapons was and is the key to maintaining an over-all military balance with the Soviet Union. By our own decision, we have accepted second place in the intercontinental ballistic missile race, and the fateful implications of this decision are hardly being discussed publicly.

We are being overtaken industrially and scientifically, the fields in which our head start seemed to make the contest most one-sided in our favor.

We have been outmaneuvered politically in one vital area after another. In the Middle East, for example, which is the arena of our most

recent reverses, it takes either a fool or a genius to see anything but disaster ahead.

And finally, we have never been in the same league with the Russians in the psychological war of wits and words.

The meaning of all this is clear. Our power, and the power of the free world as a whole, is declining in relation to the power of the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc. The process is cumulative and accelerating.

The result of this process can be predicted with something like scientific precision. The cumulative effect of growing Soviet power and declining American power will be a progressive loss of ability to influence events, and a chain reaction of defeats for freedom.

Why is our nation falling behind in the contest?

We have been repeatedly warned by committees of distinguished citizens that we must pull ourselves together -- or fail. Sometimes the warnings are dramatic enough to create a brief stir in the press and public -- but they are quickly and quietly forgotten.

The tragedy is that we are not acting upon our knowledge. It is the all-too familiar tragedy of the failure of will.

The most important question we face as a nation is WHY? Why are we failing to do what we should do -- to survive?

I will not pretend that I can give a full answer in this short speech, tonight. But I would call your attention to what I think may be our fundamental trouble: we lack a coherent and purposeful national strategy to win the cold war.

There is no grand plan that sets forth in simple terms what we have to do to survive, and why.

Witness the shotgun approach to weapons problems -- doing a little of everything, backing and filling on critical new projects -- with no basic plan to guide our effort.

Witness the stop-gap handling of foreign aid -- year after year adopting the familiar program -- hoping because it worked once it will work again.

Witness the sporadic response to each new crisis -- ad hoc committees here, pro-tem bureaus there -- but no over-all plan for a sustained response.

The fact is that few Americans have any idea of what our duty is. It has not been articulated clearly and boldly. Our people are never shown the whole package of effort that is required -- their enthusiasms are not aroused nor are their powers engaged.

We could learn from British experience in the 19th Century. Then every man understood the importance to England of free trade, of freedom of the seas, of a strong Navy, and of an able civil service to operate the vast empire. Most young men trained from childhood to contribute to the purposes England had to fulfill. As a result, the British people sustained a prodigious national effort.

We could also learn from our experience in the two World Wars. Then the nation knew what it was trying to do, what was demanded of it, and why. This made possible the marvelous unity, energy, and vitality displayed by free men in time of war.

The nub of the matter is this: Faced with a deadly challenge, a democracy must have a strategy to meet it -- a strategy which is the supreme organizer of our strength.

Lacking it, our efforts are like Humpty Dumpty after the fall. The wonder is whether all the kings' horses and all the kings' men can ever put us together again.

Our needs in this respect can be briefly summarized:

First, we must understand that the cold war is a war, the outcome of which will be victory or defeat for the free way of life.

Second, we must understand that we are making our big investment in defense in order to buy time to carry out a positive program for creating a peaceful world. Our real job is to win the cold war.

Third, we must define our short- and long-run goals in meaningful terms. What is the road to the success we seek, and what obstacles stand in the way?

Fourth, we must plan a national policy to move toward our goals, including a master program of requirements and priorities.

Fifth, we must develop the military, political, economic, scientific, and related capabilities required for success; and

Sixth, we must use these capabilities skillfully and stubbornly until the foundations of a peaceful world order have been securely established.

To do these things would be to forge a national strategy for the cold war and to wield our power as a mighty sword in the cause of freedom.

I believe the effort to develop such a strategy, and the public discussion accompanying the effort, would do much to create the unity of purpose and the national will needed for success.

How can we get such a grand strategic plan?

Of course, leadership is vitally important. There is no wholly

adequate substitute for it. The American people, furthermore, have shown time and again that they will respond to dynamic, vigorous, plain-spoken inspired leadership.

But we cannot afford, and should not try, to rely wholly on leadership. We must also improve our methods for developing an adequate national strategy and for winning public support for it.

I believe that both Congress and the Executive Branch should now give intensive study to the organization of the federal government for survival in the contest with world Communism, including the procedures of the National Security Council.

We should tackle this central issue of our time: How can a free society so organize its human and material resources as to outperform totalitarianism?

Obviously, all study of this issue should be conducted in a non-partisan manner. We are interested not in destructive criticism but in constructive reform.

Let me say that the experience of your own membership in civil affairs military government can be very helpful in such a review. Of all people, you know how good organization helps the performance of a vital public function, and how poor organization hurts.

Our national policy-making machinery has not been subjected to careful examination since it was created by Act of Congress in 1947. It is time to study it in the light of our experience during these twelve crisis-laden years. At times it seems to have functioned rather well. At other times, it seems to have functioned poorly.

In any event, it has failed to produce the kind of national strategy our world position now requires. It should be possible to find out why.

In theory, the machinery of the National Security Council should do the job. The Planning Board plans and proposes new policies and programs. In its preparatory work, the various departments and agencies are consulted and make known their views. The agreed conclusions of the Planning Board are submitted to the NSC, which serves in an advisory capacity to the President. The President decides. The policies and programs are then carried out under the watchful eye of the Operations Coordinating Board. The President presumably has a clear and consistent policy to present to the Congress and to the American people.

The procedure seems as sound as the dollar -- but then the dollar is also a bit inflated these days.

There are a few simple questions we should ask:

What is the present structure for formulating and implementing national policy?

What is it supposed to accomplish?

Is it doing it?

In what areas are there grave shortcomings?

Why is this the case?

What improvements should be made?

There is one operating concept that especially needs review -- that is the concept of "completed staff work". According to this concept, the Planning Board has done its job well when its proposals are accepted without change by the NSC and the President.

I have serious doubts about the merit of this approach to policy making. It seems to me that the important decisions are always difficult decisions, involving a choice between several possible courses of action, each of which has advantages and disadvantages.

I wonder to what extent the Planning Board fully analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of alternative courses of action and presents this analysis to the NSC. How often are the NSC and the President confronted with sharply defined issues so that they are compelled to make, as they should, the hard choices?

For example, did the NSC ever fully consider the impact on American prestige of permitting the Russians to register scientific firsts in the intercontinental ballistic missile, and in orbiting a satellite?

Has the NSC debated the alternative ways this nation could support and finance an increased defense program?

Has the NSC debated whether or not to make it a goal of national policy to increase the rate of growth of our gross national product from two or three per cent to five or six per cent a year?

Has the NSC discussed whether or not we should allocate a rising proportion of our total output to public purposes, domestic and foreign?

These represent some of the tough but crucial issues which the NSC and the President must resolve. I am convinced that meaningful and firm decisions cannot evolve without vigorous discussion of alternative courses of action.

You may not find it surprising that a Senator should take this point of view. Seriously, however, one of the great merits of the Senate as a legislative body is that issues are debated -- and clarified in the process. I do not suggest that the NSC should resolve its will by a vote. But I do suggest that the President is more likely to make meaningful decisions, which can be translated into purposeful, hard-hitting action, after vigorous debate rather than without it.

There is some reason to believe that the proposals prepared by the Planning Board are written in such generalities that they may mean one

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thing to one department and quite another thing to another department. The effort to reach agreement at too low a level -- that is, at the Planning Board Level -- may mean that agreement is purchased at the price of clarity.

This is but one of many questions that require study. Where one will come out is, of course, not yet foreseeable. Perhaps we will be agreeably surprised. But it is my strong belief that careful, sustained study will bring forward helpful suggestions to improve our processes for the making and implementation of an integrated national policy.

170 million Americans are committed to the ideals of democracy, individual liberty, justice, and free institutions. But devotion to principle alone will not see us through. 170 million Americans must also be dedicated to the means for preserving these ideals.

We have proved that we can meet the urgent demands of a hot war. Now we must prove that we can sustain the grueling, tedious, continuing tasks of the cold war.

This type of conflict is a wholly new experience for the American people. The Soviet objective is the same as in a hot war -- to defeat us. But Moscow relies on limited actions, indirect threats, and diffuse challenges -- hoping not to arouse us to action.

It is far more difficult for a free society to generate the effort for this kind of conflict than for the dramatic clashes of a hot war. The Soviets know this -- and are counting on it.

It is all the more essential, therefore, that we have an understandable plan for victory.

Clearly our people cannot be dedicated to vague programs, or respond enthusiastically to a host of conflicting demands. We must know where we

are going and how we are going to get there. We must have a grand strategy for survival.

In closing, let me say simply this:

With such a strategy I believe freedom can prevail.

The earth today is an arena of clashing systems of order. But the idea of freedom is by all odds the most potent idea in history. And free men have the mental and material resources to build a world community which makes room for all peoples who wish to live in peace.

Granted, the unrelenting encounter with the Kremlin tests our ability to the limit. Surely, this is a worthy test of our national quality. A better and a stronger America can emerge from this struggle.

I believe America can and will meet the challenge.

S R 115 - Def. called
by Keating - referred
to Harlow -

Person's meetings
Tanita Bill - Freedom
Academy.

115 - Hard to oppose
study of methods and
procedures.

Agreed attempt to
head off resolution
Harlow et al. working
both sides

Testimony only on
things procedural, not
substantive

Fact will call outside
witnesses